291 [437] Raw cotton and cotton sheeting have long been imported, and still are, but the toga (shamma), probably the oldest of the Abyssinian cotton garments, is made domestically, from cotton spun by the housewife and woven on the handloom of the weaver.

The cotton clothing now considered "traditional" is always white. The explanation given by the pious is that white is the expression of mourning, because of the passing from the earth of Jesus Christ.

[294] Tailoring is done by poor semi-specialized Amhara men at "big markets". Garments are made with great care, to follow the traditional style and also fit well. There are no new fashions in these costumes, for the prevalent pattern is conservative: to be properly dressed for the occasion, in the style of one's forebears. Variety exists in trousers: the jodphurs which reach to the bare feet, as former clothing of feudal lords, are more prestigeful than the wide peasant trousers that narrow to the leg just below the knee. The shirt, worn kneelength above the trousers, similarly narrows on the forearm, and is therefore called "ej tebab" (lit. narrow-sleeve) in the vernacular, instead of "qamis", the proper name (possibly from French chemise, though no Amhara would admit this foreign name for his "traditional" shirt). The only untailored garment is the toga, but this is used for expression of moods and situational conditions (see "language of the shamma").

296 Laundering is done in or near riverbeds, or brooks, by women, housewives or female ex-slaves, using the dried

764 personal belongings such as shamma, horncup, oxhide bed-cover.

765 The tăzkar is the memorial feast 40 days after death, on which, under favorable conditions, the soul is believed to be freed from purgatory. Preparations for this feast are made almost as soon as the funeral is over. Kinfolk and neighbors bring food and drink, but despite that, tazkar feasts are often costly, far beyond the economic means of poorer families. Money must be given to the priests who recite the "fetät", the prayer for absolution. It is the responsibility not only of direct descendants, but of the entire kinfolk to arrange for a "tăzkar", and it is a great shame when a person has no tazkar. No tazkar is made for unbaptized babies; for violaters of the fasts of Wednesday, Friday and lent; for suicides. Also, when a person dies what is considered a particularly unnatural death, by drowning, fire, lightning, etc., the priests have to decide whether a tazkar can be held, or whether the death was some special punishment for some great capital crime that had gone undetected.

d) "Saluting the church", and Private Communion.

788 Though lay individuals do not usually participate in church worship, going to the "bětă kristyan" (church) is a formal affair. The shamma is redraped when entering the churchyard, so as to form a cross-wise fold over

763 (togas), horncups, etc, usually are given to the confessor, also some cash. In return, the confessor gives last rites, absolving the dying from sin, and, after death, assigns a burial place in the churchyard if the deceased was a member of the parish. A circumference of rocks is set around the grave, but no permanent gravestones, so that after a few years the growth of bush and the rains have obscured the spot. Exceptions are only in case of noblemen, "tälläqäw", (great man) where markings are remembered long enough to permit digging up the bones if they wanted them sent to some holy monastery, such as Dabra Libanos. Non-members of the parish, especially if poor, are buried in the bush some distance from the residential area.

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[763] The confessor stays with the dying, praying until the last moment. When death sets in, the eyes and lips are closed, the corpse is washed, the big toes and thumbs are tied, the arms folded in a cross, so that the hands cover the sexual parts. The body is wrapped in a shamma, and tied in a mat of palm branches or bread reeds, (called "säläyn"); tied on top of the head, across area of the eyes, neck, biceps, forearm, waist, thigh, below knee, and over the heel. The corpse is placed on the bed ("alga", carried to church, entering at the north gate as "salute" to the church, the mass is chanted, incense is burned in raising clouds, then the corpse is buried in a comparatively shallow grave which is covered with earth and then rocks. It is usually not marked with a name.

765 The moment death has set in, women run screaming out of the hut to announce their grief, wailing loudly and incessantly. In some areas they still scratch and cut themselves till blood flows, though the emperor's urging of restraint is reducing this. The

hands are thrown into the air in a gesture of loss and abandonment in grief, and the mourners leap into the air, dancing about in semi-formal style, as if suffering such intense inner pain that they cannot stand in one place. Some roll on the ground, some hit themselves with rocks.

Men wail and dance in somewhat more restrained fashion, which soon turns into a more formal eulogy. Whenever another kinsman or neighbor arrives on the scene, both men and women fall on each other's necks (mostly of the same sex), in a gesture of mutual condolence. Both men and women break into semi-chanted eulogies, praising the goodness of the departed, recalling past bereavements, even the deaths of saints and great warriors not related to them.

This more formal funeral chant, impromptu though it is, is called "ərgədo". It consists of plaintive chants in the mode called "mərəgəd səma", is accompanied by slow rythmic dance movements in which the knees are raised high, by refrains, rythmic handclapping, and, in case of a "great man", even by drums. The funeral chant is repeated when the corpse is carried in farewell procession around the church, and for many days thereafter as kinsmen arrive from afar for condolence.

Professional weepers, "alqash", who are always female, are employed only by families of "tellaq säw" (great men). They are adept at impromptu composition of poetry, as well as equipped with powerful and trained lungs.

Endowments and bequests to the church, by noblemen, are handled by the "gəs gobaz" of the nearest church, but if no large, well-organized church is near, the governor of the province may appoint a local "choqa shum", or a higher state officer, to handle the bequest.

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

000 bequest.

765 Mourning is well organized and elaborate. Women shave their heads in many regions. Their shammas are dyed black, or at least dirtied, or, in towns, worn upside down with black borders. Even women calling on a mourner disarray their togas in sympathy before entering. Since it is considered shameful to mourn alone, kinfolk come from afar, and they as well as neighbors, bring enjara, barley beer, meat stew, coffee, even cash to contribute to the fee of the priests and expenses of "tazkar" (memorial services and feasts). Thus the mourning turns into a feast, which in turn attracts large numbers of people, including non-relatives, free-loaders and multitudes of beggars.

The biggest formal "tazkar" is held on the 40th day after death, when the soul is believed to have its earliest opportunity to be freed from purgatory. Masses are chanted in the church, and priests and chanters are rewarded with money, barley-beer, and a place of honor at the big feast. The rectangular shelter, "dass" (used in weddings), is erected once again, of young treetrunks, covered with the branches, and odoriferous grasses are spread on the ground. Women sit in their own groups; and the odors of their spiced pepper stewpots, and the large quantities of barley beer consumed, soon give both men and women, kinfolk and visitors, an atmosphere of a feast rather than that of mourning.

At the "tazkar" for a deceased noblewoman held on the meadows of the monastery of Dabra Libanos, more than 5,000 peasants were feasted. Even peasants in modest circumstances fete more than 100 persons, slaughter about 5 sheep and two old oxen, contribute dozens of huge jarsful of barley-beer, hundreds of enjara breads. As a

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

765 result, the "taskar" is the greatest single economic consumption in the life cycle, and not infrequently brings economic ruin, so that measures to restrain it have often been urged. But since everyone wants to imitate the "great man" (noble) and no one wants to appear to mourn too lightly, taskars continue elaborate. They are also major social events.

Lesser taskar memorial services and feasts are observed, especially by the noblemen and well-to-do, on the 7th day after death, and on the 12th and 30th days, 6 months, one year, and 7 years after the passing. Upon leaving, the condolents say to the mourners: "May God give rest to his soul".

Even in more modern Addis Ababa, little has changed in the taskar pattern, except that the aforementioned physical violence is now reduced.

291 When doing physical labor - "boddäna" - lift toga above shoulders to free arms;

- "adägaddäga" - knot toga across chest; wrap-around. (also to tie shammas of debtors to creditors, or prisoners to guard's).

[411] To parry blows - "mäkäta" - wrapping toga around left forearm, as shield.

Preparing for battle - "adägaddäga" (see above): knotting shamma across chest, after wrapping it tightly around the waist.

When cold - "seqseq läbbäs" - doubling a heavy shamma (called "kuta" or "derreb") to wrap oneself in completely, even covering covering head, at night.

When hot - a light shamma of muslin ("näṭäla") may be rolled around the head - "täṭäṭäma". Hence, the turban of priests is called "mäṭäṭämiya", a tight wrap-around of the head by muslin.

[535] When dancing - before "däbtära" (scribe-choristers) begin to dance, in church, they first drape the toga tightly ("shäbäsh-shäbä"), so that the flaps will not drop from the shoulders during the motion.

[765] In mourning - while dancing the funeral motion, accompanying the improvised eulogy, women approach each other holding their own togas outward and horizontal, like huge wings, (as if they were holding a spear like men dancing the "fukkara" boast dance).

201 291 178 685 Some of these expressive ways of draping the shamma are falling into disuse in the towns where the people are more affected by what passes as "modern dress". However, an interesting increase in one way of draping the shamma can be noticed in recent years: Now that debtors are no

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
MP5 Amhara MP5

the imperfection was, by all manner of means, to be removed; so that the Catholics, as well as the Cophts, in Egypt, undergo excision ever since. This is done with a knife, or razor, by women, generally when the child is about eight years old *.

There is another ceremony, with which I shall close, and this regards the women also, and I shall call it *incision*. This is an usage frequent, and still retained among the Jews, though positively prohibited by the law: "Thou shalt not cut thy face for the sake of, or on account of, the dead †." As soon as a near relation dies in Abyssinia, a brother or parent, cousin-german or lover, every woman in that relation, with the nail of her little finger, which she leaves long on purpose, cuts the skin of both her temples, about the size of a sixpence; and therefore you see either a wound or a scar in every fair face in Abyssinia; and in the dry season, when the camp is out, from the loss of friends, they seldom have liberty to heal, till peace and the army return, with the rains.

The Abyssinians, like the ancient Egyptians, their first colony, in computing their time, have continued the use of the solar year. Diodorus Siculus says, "They do not reckon their time by the moon, but according to the sun; that thirty days constitute their month, to which they add five days and the fourth part of a day, and this completes their year.

These five days were, by the Egyptians, called Nici, and by the Greeks, Epagomeni, which signifies, days

* The reader will observe, by the obscurity of this passage, that it is with reluctance I have been determined to mention it at all; but as it is an historical fact, which has had material consequences, I have thought it not allowable to omit it altogether. Any naturalist, wishing for more particular information, may consult the French copy.

† Deut. chap. xiv. ver. 1.

8: Rey G-5 (1910-1920)1935
MP5 Amhara MP5

throw the end over the right shoulder from back to front. As a general rule, however, women turn them up on the left shoulder, whilst men free their right arm and shoulder. They make, floating in the breeze, a very picturesque addition to the costume of the wearers. 291

Very little difference is apparent in the dress of the Ethiopian men and women of any class. This is made of imported white cotton materials of varying design and quality, and consists of roomy trousers tied round the waist and tightened in from calf to ankle, and a loose shirt reaching below the knee. The latter is worn longer by the women, with some coloured silk embroidery round neck and cuffs; this embroidery is also carried out round the bottom of the trousers, which are tightly fastened at the ankle with tiny silver or gold buttons. The shirts of both men and women have very close-fitting sleeves from elbow to wrist, which are also buttoned, the men's shirts being finished with high tight neck-bands which give them a clean, smart appearance.

Sometimes I have seen, though rarely, the shirt and trousers, and even the *chamma*, worn in pink or blue or even yellow. This is a sign of mourning—white is otherwise the universal rule. [765]

Most Abyssinians wear a head-covering of sorts. In the case of the people this generally consists of a piece of white muslin twisted round or tied over the head; I have also, though rarely, seen them wearing straw hats of native manufacture, and, still more rarely, a sort of brown woollen cap with a tuft, not unlike a fez in shape. The better-class Abyssinian, of both sexes, sometimes affects a wide-brimmed soft grey or black felt hat of European manufacture.

8: Rey G-5 (1910-1920)1935
MP5 Amhara MP5

The Abyssinian lady and gentleman are frequently to be seen with a black satin three-quarter mantle, ornamented by a little gold braid round the neck and generally a coloured silk lining. In the rainy season a black woollen-hooded cape or *burnous* is donned by all classes, women wearing the hood at the back, and men sporting theirs on their left shoulder. The *burnous* is also a sign of mourning, for which purpose people of every class wear it.

A further, and less pleasant, sign of mourning is for the bereaved one to refrain from washing his clothes; but I only observed this practice in connection with servants and persons of humble position. Ordinarily they are very keen on washing their white garments, and even on trek there was a great "clean-up" whenever we stayed in camp for an extra twenty-four hours. The day before our return into Addis was always the occasion for the most lavish use of soap and water, and the *safari* on arrival looked really quite smart, the men all having donned spotless white *chammas*, shirt, and trousers for the occasion, when, I am bound to say, they looked externally a good deal cleaner than our travel-stained garments allowed us to do.

A cartridge belt of various colours and designs, from the plain native leather to the gold and silk embroidered specimen, is more or less generally worn by the men, and its value is also often an indication to the position or means of the wearer. In its place women use a girdle of some sort, to which is attached their keys, ear-cleaners, head-scratchers, and small silver ornaments. Parasols of neatly plaited grass, intermixed with coloured cottons, are carried frequently by both sexes in all seasons. These are quite picturesque, and no doubt serve their

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

permissive rather than prescriptive, and the degree to which individual rights are protected against the demands of collectivities.

In pursuing this analysis we shall examine in turn the three main institutional orders which were structurally differentiated in Amhara society: the kinship system, the church, and the military-political system. In conclusion we shall discuss some more general features of social organization among the Amhara which relate to the question of individual independence.

Kinship

A base line of social constraint among the Amhara is provided by the obligations inherent in their family system. The husband must work to provide food and to defend the boundaries of the family land against all comers. The wife must care for all that transpires within the home compound—preparing of food, fetching water, caring for infants, spinning cotton, tending the fire—and must avoid sexual relationships with other men. The children must tend the flocks, do other work chores, and generally obey the slightest command of any of their elders. Neglect of any of these basic obligations brings sharp reprisals: divorce of the husband, beatings of the wife and children.

Obligations toward the parents persist, moreover, long after the children have married and established families of their own. Young married men are supposed to contribute one or two days a week to working their fathers' land, and to assist them in time of litigation. They are obliged to care for their parents when the latter have become too old to provide for themselves, an obligation sometimes discharged on a rotating basis among the surviving children. There is also a solemn obligation for the children to arrange the appropriate memorial feasts (*tazkär*) following the death of a parent, especially the one that is due on the fortieth day after death.

Adolescent children are subject to the will of their parents with respect to choice of a spouse, and youths are expected to follow their fathers' wishes in connection with adult work roles. Threat of disinheritance is the powerful consideration that underpins these constraints. For their part, the parents are obliged to keep their land in the family. They may not sell it to outsiders, and must bequeath goods and land to their children, dividing them equally among the consanguine children, with perhaps a certain amount extra for the oldest son.

With regard to siblings and more distant kin, however, relations are rather casual and obligations few. Although residence tends to be virilocal among the Amhara, descent is bilateral. Except for a small number of royal and aristocratic families, therefore, there are no obligations with respect to corporate lineages. The absence of formal structure in extended kin relations is